An **anchor activity** is a strategy that allows students to work on an outgoing assignment directly related to the curriculum that can be worked on independently throughout a unit or semester.  An anchor activity is a logical extension of learning during a unit, an elaboration of important goals and outcomes that are tied to the curriculum and tasks for which students are held accountable.

The purpose of an anchor activity is to provide meaningful work for students when they are not actively engaged in classroom activities.

A **choice board**offers students a way to make decisions about what they will do in order to meet class requirements.  A choice board could be for a single lesson, a week-long lesson, or even a month-long period of study.  In order to create a choice board:

* Identify the most important elements of a lesson or unit.
* Create a required assignment or project that reflects the minimum understanding you expect all students to achieve.
* Create negotiables which expand upon the minimum understands.  These negotiables often require students to go beyond the basic levels of Bloom's Taxonomy.
* Create a final optional section that requires students the opportunity for enrichment.  The optional section often reflects activities that students can use for extra credit.

**Cubing** requires students to look at a topic from six different angles such as: *Describe It!, Compare It!, Associate It!, Apply It!, Analyze It!, Argue For or Against It!.* Teachers often create a visual cube that serves as a starting point when they want students to analyze or consider various aspects of a topic.  Cubes can be an after-reading strategy that requires students to think critically about a topic.  When students work with cubes, they apply information in new ways.  Cubes can be differentiated by interest and readiness.

**Adaptations to cubing**

* Design cubes based on interest or learning profiles.
* Use the cubes as dice that students roll.
* In math, create problems for students to solve.  One problem is printed on each side of the cube.
* Create cubes around the Multiple Intelligences.
* Incorporate Bloom's Taxonomy.

The **Layered-Curriculum** approach features a 3-layer model that requires students to use higher level thinking skills as they work through the layers.  The layers are often connected to grades:

* The **C Layer** is the basic layer of competency and reflects what all students must do.  If students successfully complete the tasks required in the C Layer, they earn a C grade.  These activities typically ask students to collect factual information.
* The **B Layer** provides students with the opportunity to apply, manipulate, and play with the information they gathered while completing the C Layer activities.  Students who successfully complete the C and B Layers can earn a B grade.
* The **A Layer** asks students to think critically about an issue.  It consists of questions that ask students to analyze a topic.  Frequently, no right or wrong answer exists.  Students who successfully complete C, B, and A Layers can earn an A grade.

**RAFT** is an acronym for Role, Audience, Format, and Topic.  In a RAFT, students take on a particular role, develop a product for a specified audience in a particular format and on a topic that gets right at the heart of what matters most in a particular segment of study.  At some points, a teacher may want to assign students particular RAFTs and at other points may want the student to make the choice.  RAFT assignments are typically of fairly short duration and can be completed at school or at home.

After students have worked to gain essential knowledge, understanding, and skill about a topic, they can use **Think Dots** to review, demonstrate, and extend their thinking on the subject.  Think Dots are made of six cards that are hole-punched in one corner.  The set is held together with a notebook ring, a loop of string, or any other device that allows students to flip through the set easily.  Each card has one or more dots on its front.  On the back of each card is a question or task that asks students to work directly with important knowledge, understanding, and skills related to the topic they are studying.

**Tiering** is an instructional approach designed to have students of differing readiness levels work with essential knowledge, understanding, and skills but to do so at levels of difficulty appropriately challenging for them as individuals at a given point in the instructional cycle.  To tier an activity or work product:

* Clearly establish what students should know, understand, and be able to do as a result of the activity or product assignment.
* Select elements to tier.
* Develop one activity or product assignment that is interesting and engaging for students, squarely focuses on the stated learning goals, and requires students to work at a high level of thought.
* Design a similar task for struggling learners.  The task should make adjustments based on student readiness.
* If needed, develop a third, more advanced activity for learners who have already mastered the basic concepts or skills being addressed.

# Six Ways to Tier a Lesson

1. **Tier by challenge level** (Bloom's Taxonomy)
2. **Tier by complexity** (Address the needs of students at introductory levels, as well as students who are ready for more advanced work)
3. **Tier by resources** (Choose materials at various reading levels and complexity of content)
4. **Tier by outcomes** (Students use the same materials, but their end-products vary)
5. **Tier by process** (The end-products are a the some, but the ways in which students arrive at those outcomes may vary)
6. **Tier by product** (Group multiple intelligences or learning styles, followed by assignments that fit those preferences)

 Sources:

*Differentiating Instruction in the Regular Classroom* by Diane Heacox

*Fair Isn't Always Equal: Assessing and Grading in the Differentiated Classroom* by Rick Wormeli

*Differentiating the High School Classroom: Solution Strategies for 18 Common Obstacles* by Kathy Nunley

Fulfilling the Promise of the Differentiated Classroom by Carol-Ann Tomlinson